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and sprinkles the baby and its belongings with it, as well as the path which she used in going to the brook for water or other needs. Only after this procedure is she permitted to leave the *kokhi* and move over with her child into the *samrevlo*.

The rules of the final purification required of the woman in order to enter her home and community after childbirth are more complicated in detail. Not only the mother and her baby, but all objects used by her during the time of her separation, and even the members of her family, are regarded as unclean and are called *shereulni*,[8] and have no right to enter the *Khati*[1] until the purification presented by custom is performed. The ceremony of purification required after the childbirth for the mother and her baby and the sanctification of her house is known as *sanathlo* or *sakhlis sanathlavi*.[9]

Two weeks after the birth of the child, the head priest of the community, the *khutsi*, kills a sheep as a sacrificial offering to God on the roof of the house. Two weeks later, about the time of the return of the mother and the baby, the same kind of sacrifice is made by the *khutsi*. At this time he catches the blood of the slain animal in a cup and sprinkles the walls, pillars, and door-posts of the house with it. Only after this ceremony is the whole family regarded as clean again and entitled to enter the *Khati*. Prior to this moment the father does not come near the baby, which is regarded as unclean as its mother.

The details of the custom of "purification" or cleansing, as observed by the Khevsurs, may be understood from the following description.[10] After moving from the *kokhi* into the *samrevlo*[2] the woman stays there from four to six weeks. During this time she is engaged in field work. When she returns to the house of her husband and family, she is obliged to put herself and her baby, as well as all her belongings—everything that she brings from the *samrevlo*—through the process of purification, which consists of three different parts: The first part of the purification is called in Georgian, *matusva;* it consists of the following: the woman

[8] Eristov: 114.
[9] Urbneli.
[10] Bardavelidze-Lomia: 250.

[1] [i.e., sanctuary -- Analyst]
[2] [see cat#16, pp95-96 -- Analyst]

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783 562 passes everything, one after another, over the fire, and at this time she is obliged to say the words established by custom: "Fire, give thy purity." After the *matusva*, she must put the things out of the *samrevlo* and shake them well. This is the second part of the purification and is called *gamotskepa*. And at last she must sprinkle everything with holy water which is brought to her for this purpose from the home. She takes the water into her mouth and so sprinkles the things. This last part of the purification is called *shapkhukeba*.

Only after the accomplishment of all the above-mentioned tasks are the woman, her baby and belongings regarded as clean and as having the right to enter the home of her family.

278 The "holy" water which is used by the woman for the purification is the water which is blessed by the preacher during the church ceremonies in commemoration of Christ's baptism. The people take the water home and preserve it in bottles for such future use as cleansing, purifying, and medical purposes. This custom is in universal use throughout Georgia. I remember seeing such bottles in many houses. The water is regarded by the people as medicine against almost every kind of disease: such as sore eyes, stomach trouble, headache, etc.

844 562 Among the Svans also, the woman lying in childbed is regarded as unclean and is put in a separate place but not in a special hut built for her sojourn. The woman is in isolation and in considered as unclean until the priest says special prayers of purification upon her and the baby. Not only contact, as was mentioned above concerning the women in menstruation, but even the mere presence of such a woman in the neighborhood makes a hunter polluted and consequently unable to take part in the hunting expedition.

844 787 When the Khevsur woman is in travail during childbirth and her loud screams and cries are heard far from the *kokhi*, her husband and relatives approach the hut and with loud shouts fire their guns in order to keep away evil spirits. Or sometimes the husband runs into the hut, places his gun on the shoulder of his suffering wife, and shouts to her words of encouragement while firing his gun. He does this only with the aim of driving

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791 animals, he usually selects the best breed known in the community.
326 If after consultation with the blacksmith and presentation of the offering the sick man recovers, the result is fame and new presents and offerings to the blacksmith and his anvil; but in the event the man dies, the explanation is that the relatives of the sick person did not know how to appease the anvil, or they did not apply to the right blacksmith's shop and anvil, as it should have been, etc. These superstitious beliefs of the people give to the blacksmiths, besides the profits mentioned, a further advantage in that they may keep the doors of their homes and shops wide open during the day or night without fear of having their property stolen, despite the fact that the people are not very strict in the proper interpretation of the words "mine" and "thine."

[171] Beliefs similar to those just described concerning the supernatural power of iron are found among other peoples of the Caucasus. For example, the Circassians have a special deity, the protector of blacksmiths, called *Tliebse,* about whom M. Taitbout de Marigny[39] relates that "le jour de sa fete, on fait, en son honneur, des libations sur un soc et une hache. . . ."

●783 Besides using iron as a protective power against evil creatures,
843 the people use fire also. Thus the Georgians of Imerethi[40]
372 believe that the evil being of the woods, called *chinka,* is afraid of the fire. In the evening, no one is permitted to enter the room of a pregnant woman without previously warming himself before the fire in the fire-place. If one neglects to take this precaution, the evil spirit may follow the newcomer into the room and drive the woman mad.

Among the Georgians of Meskhethi,[41] if a traveler comes at night into a house where there is a woman with child, he must first cleanse himself of the evil spirit (*avi suli*) who may otherwise enter the room with him. In order to avoid this danger and to cleanse the traveler, he is required to jump over a burning pile and allow himself to be sprinkled with holy water.

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[39] Taitbout de Marigny: b, 309.
[40] Mashurko: 369.
[41] Khakhanov: b, 11.

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The same cleansing power of fire is used by the Khevsur woman at the time of her purification when she leaves the menstrual hut (*samrevlo*) and returns home with her baby.

Many other peoples of the Caucasus share the Georgians' belief in the supernatural power of fire.[42] Thus, for example, the Abkhazians,[43] in order to protect women in childbed from the evil spirit, called *abn-ikou*, ask the help of the god of the house-hearth, called *ajakhar*, promising him a thank-offering for his help.

The people also believe in the protective power of a rope in the shape of a snake. For example, in the district of Sakatali, a rope resembling a snake is laid around the woman in childbed and the people continually fire their guns, because they believe that evil spirits are afraid of snakes and gun-shots.

In some parts of Georgia red thread is also used as a defense against the evil spirits attacking women in childbed. In such cases, the hip of the woman in travail is bound with red thread as a means of providing sympathetic magic which will protect her from evil spirits[44] who, as the people think, cause the suffering.

It should be interesting to mention briefly the belief of the Georgians, not only in the magical power of red thread, but in the red color generally. Almost every contagious disease is understood by the people to be sent not merely by evil spirits but as personifications of the spirits themselves.[45] Therefore, to cure the sick it is necessary, in their opinion, to please the spirits. The spirits are called *batonebi*, meaning "lords," the plural form of the Georgian word, *batoni*, meaning a lord. In order to appease and beseech the *batonebi*[46] to depart from sick persons, they try to please them with songs, music, prayers, decorating the room with gay colors, putting on a new dress, keeping everything clean, avoiding any disturbances, etc.

The principal color in decorating and dressing is red. This color predominates, and red thread is used as a protective

[42] Chursin: f.
[43] Derjavin: 14-15.
[44] Jashvili: 63.
[45] Stepanov: 88-9.
[46] Mamaladze: 45-6.

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Until the mother regains her strength and recovers entirely, she is never left alone during day or night, because she may be frightened by something, as the people say.

After the woman has been delivered of her child, a priest is invited, who sprinkles the house with holy water.

This invitation of the priest and the sprinkling of the house with holy water is nothing more than the process of purification which is practiced in the whole of Georgia, and represents the survival of the old beliefs when the women were regarded as unclean and lived apart, and the rules of purification after childbirth were observed. These views and customs have been replaced by others and forgotten in the Lowlands of Georgia, but they still hold ground, as we have seen from the examples given in the previous discussion of the Alpine communities of the Khevsurs, Pshavs, Tushes, and Svans, although there also they are not static but changing, dying gradually under the pressure of civilization.

In reviewing this chapter, dealing with the customs and beliefs of the Georgian Highlanders regulating the peculiar position of woman in society based on the religious beliefs of the people, our aim has been to present facts, avoiding as much as possible any generalizations and especially the construction of theories in order to explain the origin and meaning of the customs described.

We think that any attempt to explain the origin of the customs in question is, for the present, premature. The scientific knowledge of the subject is still unsatisfactory,[58] and especially in the field of the ethnological researches in the Caucasus, where the science of ethnology is in its very infancy.[59] On the other hand, the possibility of a great future for ethnological investigation in the Caucasus is not difficult to predict.

Expressing our opinion of the necessity of precaution, as above stated, we have in mind the interesting work by V. Bardavelidze-Lomia, frequently cited in this chapter. This valuable work was of great assistance in discussing the subject in question, for which I am cordially thankful to the author. But allow me to mention,

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[58] Lowie: b, 205-6.
[59] Chitaia:
[60] Chursin: d.

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tude if he will not say the truth." After this the accused took the oath.

Among the Khevsurs and Pshavs, when the judges have difficulty in their decision, they allow the accused to take the oath, which consists of the suspect giving vow to the truthfulness of his words.[80] In important cases another kind of oath is used, which is taken in the presence of witnesses, one from each community. As the person taking the oath and the witnesses are obliged before the ceremony to keep themselves in purity, they have no right to cohabit with their wives, and on the day appointed for the ceremony must neither eat nor drink. When the judges, the attendants of the sanctuary, and the people of the community are assembled, the man taking the oath approaches the sanctuary with his witnesses. He takes the sacred standard and the silver cup, and recites the oath as proof of the truthfulness of his testimony. At this time the witnesses put their hands on his shoulders and after every sentence uttered by the man taking the oath they all say amen. If the witnesses do not appear in the sanctuary for the ceremony, the oath is not regarded as effective.

Taking the oath also plays a very important role with other groups of the Georgian nation. For example, the Megrelians use it in solving doubtful cases.

A Megrelian has not only deep reverence for the *khati*,[1] but also a great fear, which compels him to confess his delinquency, if not at the moment of taking the oath, at least later, sometimes after a long interval. The number of witnesses depend upon the importance of the case. Witnesses do not willingly accept this office, and their hesitation in taking part in the ceremony is based on the current belief of the people that a falsely taken oath will punish every participant in the proceedings during all his life. Consequently, the possible lack of success in enterprises or different troubles following one after the other, such as the death of relatives, bad harvest, epizooty and other evils, convince the Megrelian that the cause of all these calamities is the falsely taken oath. In such a case he goes to the party who has lost the case

[80] Eristov: 132.

[1] [i.e., sanctuary; see cat. 116, p. 25 ff. — Analyst]

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and pays him dearly in order that he may free him from the oath. Sometimes not only the witness but even the person who took the oath and won the case is brought to the conviction, in the same way as already stated dealing with witnesses, in the falsity of testimony given by him, and consequently he returns not only everything received by him through the judges, but also pays voluntarily a high fine in order to be freed from the oath.

As an illustration of this superstitious belief connected with the process of taking an oath, we may mention a certain appeal of a Megrelian made in court.[51] The petitioner had asked the court to take measures in endorsing his request, which was based on sheer superstition and was deeply engraved on the mind and conscience of the people as a custom inherited from their ancestors. "Fifteen years ago," said the Megrelian, "I had a dispute with my neighbor about land. We had a hearing, and when I took the oath, with ten witnesses admitted by the plaintiff, the land was given to me. From that time on I owned the property, and two years later sold half of it to the priest. Soon afterward, one misfortune after another began in my home, and I was convinced that the cause of all this was the falsely taken oath. In order to free myself from the calamity, I returned the land to the neighbor, but the priest will not return his portion for any price, and now I have come to ask the court to order the priest to sell back to me his portion of the land, and I will give a higher price than that fixed by our honest neighbors. If I am not freed from this oath I will be a most unhappy man." The authorities ignored this petition, but the priest was obliged to yield to the persistent demands of the man and his relatives and finally returned the land with great profits. In getting back the land, the Megrelian was satisfied, and his provoked conscience was calmed.

This fear of the people before the holy image (*khati*) and the endeavor to appease its anger are based on the belief that everyone is able to put a curse on his enemy before a *khati*, for which he has to pray and ask the deity to punish his antagonist. Consequently, according to the people's opinion, the offender will be

[51] Borozdin: 36.

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severely punished by the *khati* not only during his earthly life but also after his death in eternity. This procedure, so dreaded by the Megrelians, is known by them under the name of *khatis genochama*, meaning in English, "transmission to the *khati*." When someone among them finds that he is cursed, or, to use the Megrelian expression, *genochamilie* (meaning "is given over") by his enemy he hastens to make peace with him and satisfies all his claims in order, as they say, "to be freed from the wrath of *khati*."

But there is a way to avoid the anger of *khati* in giving false testimony. The man by taking an oath is not always obliged to tell "the truth and only the truth," but he may also lie and escape unpunished, with a clear conscience and peace in his criminal heart. To do this, he concludes some sort of contract or rather promises a bribe to the *khati* consisting of some sort of offering, such as a cow or sheep. This fact is described by the Italian A. Lamberti, as observed by him among the Georgians of Megrelia. "By small evidences the Megrelians have the custom," writes A. Lamberti,[52] "of permitting the accused to exculpate himself by taking an oath. The oath must be taken before any one of the holy images. The plaintiff chooses the holy image, and also the sanctuary where the accused (defender) must take the oath. This place is kept in secrecy by him, because if the accused finds out the place appointed for the ceremony he will present himself before the holy image the day before the appointed time, kneel before it and say: 'Thou knowest well that I have committed the crime and that I am confessing now on my knees to you and declaring my guilt; may this confession remain between us both, and as I have fulfilled my duty toward you with this confession, (please) forgive me if in the presence of the others I shall deny my guilt. In order that thou wilt not be angry with me I pledge thee a cow (or sheep).' After this secret confession he counts his conscience clean, and in taking the oath officially before this image he is convinced that he has full right to lie and still be unharmed."

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[52] Lamberti: 86.

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C. G. 771 [783] Traces of Zoroastrianism are preserved in the idea of the uncleanness of women, especially when menstruating or with child, and of corpses, as found among the Georgian mountaineers; further in some Georgian words, e. g. dzhodzhokheti "hell" (cf. M. Pers. dushakhw). C. G. [778] Remnants of Christianity in the N. W. Caucasus were the custom of planting a cross in the ground near a sacred grove, or hanging it in a sacred tree before a ceremony; further the seven-day week and the C. G. [805] names of the days, which are partly translations or mutilations of Greek names. In Abkhazia a number of Byzantine churches have been preserved.